

Economic Implications of The Wean-down

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Key Points:

- The main cost of the wean-down is associated with piglet management and future performance of that batch.
- The value of the cost of the wean-down may be recovered after 4 weeks.

We invite SHMP participating herds to enroll in a wean-down project. We are able to subsidize testing costs with a dx lab credit of \$1,000 per herd from Boehringer-Ingelheim. Our goal is to enroll 30 wean-down herds and compare their TTS to 30 matched non wean-down herds. The power of this study will come in comparing TTS across a large number of herds to determine likelihood of success and associated risk factors.

In this issue we want to share with you the economic rationale behind the wean-down study. In these calculations we have worked with the following parameters: 3000 sows, 1500 pigs weaned per week, usually weaning at 21 days and wean-down of 10 days of life.

Costs

“Early weaned” pigs are going to take the bigger part of the cost of the process. They will need more attention, will be less efficient in terms of ADG and probably they will have more mortality. We have assumed an increase of the first diet consumption and milk replacer for those piglets younger than 16 days and only a first diet feed for those between 16 and 21 days. We assumed an increased mortality of those piglets after weaning of 5% for the wean-to-finish process (ranging from 3 to 6%) and the future margin over variable costs of those pigs was considered to be \$60. Furthermore, we have assumed that those pigs will go to the market in a lighter weight or it will take more time to reach the market weight.

The economic impact associated with the sows is related with the management of early weaned sows and their recovery time to be bred again. We have estimated this cost around \$1350. On the other hand, we will be saving money due to the change from lactation to gestation feed. We estimated that the money saved in feed will be around \$2150.

Summarizing all the above, our numbers give us a total cost of the wean down of \$16200, after accounting for first and light pig diet costs, management of sows, and increased mortality of the batch of pigs. Adding in the feed savings puts the total cost of the wean-down around \$14000. Other possible indirect costs associated with the wean-down but not accounted for are transport (in case they need to be moved twice), extra attention (heat, mats, etc...) and costs associated with the application of vaccines. Only these two benefits indicated that the cost of the wean-down can be overcome within 3 or 4 weeks of producing negative piglets.

Benefits

Benefits of the wean-down will be associated with the absence of PRRS positive batches at nurseries and finishers. We have estimated that PRRS negative batches will have a reduction in mortality of 1% and increased ADG of 0.02 pounds. Including only these two benefits indicated that the cost of the wean-down can be overcome within 3 or 4 weeks of producing negative piglets.

Some other benefits of the wean-down are the ability to commingle sooner with other PRRS negative piglets, opening the herd sooner for gilts and reducing the impact of the closure on the parity distribution.

We gladly would like to discuss the project and our assumptions with any of you or to provide further information of the calculations done here

	Costs	Benefits
Extra feed costs associated to piglets (Feed and milk replacer)	\$6520	
Early weaned sows management	\$1350	
Cost of increased mortality in wean-down batch	\$2314	
Fewer lbs sold	\$4000	
Extra labor	\$2000	
Sow feed (gestation vs lactation)		\$2150
Wean down cost (cost – benefits)	\$14034	
Reduction of mortality and better feed conversion after wean-down (per batch)		\$4250
Breakeven weeks		3 - 4